SERVICE PLAN
2002/2003 – 2004/2005

Land Reserve Commission

February, 2002

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For more information on the Land Reserve Commission, contact:
Land Reserve Commission
Suite 133 - 4940 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC
V5G 4K6

or visit our Web site at
www.lrc.gov.bc.ca

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A *New Era* of Government Service

Three-year Service Plans represent an important part of the government's commitment to open and accountable government. In August 2001, the government amended the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* to require government to table a three-year Strategic Plan and annual three-year service plans for ministries and government organizations with the provincial budget. These Plans will ensure government and its individual ministries clearly outline their goals, and enable British Columbians to hold government accountable for its decisions and actions.

The government's Three Year Strategic Plan articulates the government's vision: *British Columbia is a prosperous and just province, whose citizens achieve their potential and have confidence in the future.* It also establishes three strategic goals that are key to achieving the government's overall vision:

- A strong and vibrant provincial economy
- A supportive social infrastructure
- Safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment

This Service Plan details the Commission's mission and objectives, which support the government's strategic goals. The Service Plan also includes performance measures that will be used to assess the Commission's progress in achieving its objectives. Ministry objectives and performance measures are a new initiative. In some cases, as planning progresses, performance measures will become more detailed as they are further developed.

After the end of each fiscal year, the Commission will prepare a Service Plan Report that will describe actual accomplishments for the year just completed. The Report will include a comparison of planned and actual results, from both a financial and performance measure perspective and allow the public to assess the government's performance.

In the years ahead, Service Plans and Service Plan Reports, prepared by government ministries and organizations, will become the key tool by which government will manage public resources to ensure government programs are contributing, in a measurable way, to key government priorities in an efficient and effective manner.

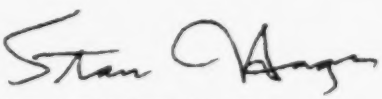
The government's three-year Strategic Plan and Commission three-year Service Plans will guide the reform of the province's public services so they meet British Columbians' needs. Measures to revitalize economic prosperity and protect and renew public services will lay the groundwork for a future of new opportunity for all British Columbians.

Accountability Statement

The 2002/03 – 2004/05 Land Reserve Commission Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*.

I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. The plan was developed in the context of the government's *New Era* commitments which are to be addressed by May 17, 2005.

All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 28, 2002 have been considered in preparing the plan and I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.



Honourable Stan Hagen
Minister of
Sustainable Resource Management

February 6, 2002

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Strategic Context

This Service Plan sets out a 3-year plan for achieving the Land Reserve Commission's goals and specific objectives and for monitoring progress, in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*.

Vision

An agricultural land reserve system that:

- Protects the land base needed to provide a safe and secure source of food;
- Expands economic opportunities;
- Promotes healthy communities; and
- Enhances economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Mission

To protect the agricultural land base necessary to provide a safe and secure food supply that meets the current and future needs of British Columbians.

Values

Partnership, collaboration and consultation — The Commission is aware that its decisions affect others, and that others may share in the responsibility for making decisions. The Commission strives to develop working relationships with local governments, First Nations and other communities of interest and to ensure consultation with all stakeholders in its decisions.

Science and knowledge — Land reserve boundaries and land use regulations/ decisions are based on biophysical criteria as well as local circumstances.

Comprehensive and integrated approach — Policies and programs foster long-term sustainability in the interests of BC's future development by considering a range of economic, social and environmental values.

Accountability, fairness and transparency — The Commission acts fairly and in the public interest. The Commission is accountable for its actions and the basis of decisions are public information, available to all those affected by a decision.

Responsiveness — The Commission, in discharging its responsibility to protect the Provincial interest, responds to the needs of farmers, landowners, applicants, local governments and others.

Planning Context

Trends

The Land Reserve Commission operates in a dynamic environment that is affected by many external trends, occurrences, and actions. Influencing trends occur globally, within British Columbia and within the agriculture industry. The Commission's response to these influences will determine, in part, its success in accomplishing its mission and implementing new Government directions.

International trends and occurrences may affect the utilization and economic importance of BC's working agricultural land base. Examples include:

- rising populations, increasing competition for land and resources within other nations and provinces, and BC's reputation for high quality food products may result in larger export markets for BC farm products, as well as a larger domestic market as the cost of imported food increases; and
- rising living standards within many nations may result in increased ability to buy BC farm products, as well as additional demand as daily caloric consumption per capita increases.

Within BC, significant trends that affect the land reserve system and the use of agricultural land include:

- growing public demand for organically or locally grown produce may result in shifts or increases in the utilization of agricultural land (e.g. increasing use of small agricultural lots);
- population growth, particularly in the Fraser Valley, Okanagan and Vancouver Island, is increasing the development pressure on agricultural land, competition for water resources, and other demands on the working land base;
- advances in technology have the potential to increase the sustainable productive capacity of agricultural land and enable farmers to adapt quickly to changing market preferences and to respond to market opportunities; and
- increasing public environmental awareness highlights the importance of agricultural land for other values such as wildlife habitat and recreation and demands for more sustainable farming practices by industry.

Challenges

- The transition to new core services and business processes must be completed with fewer financial and staff resources. As well, there is uncertainty around the outcome of the processes of other ministries and agencies which may significantly impact on the Commission's ability to deliver core services;
- Economic pressures as a result of fluctuating agricultural commodity prices and demand for employment lands to diversify the economic base of communities will result in mounting pressure to release lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve; and
- The First Nation treaty settlement process may involve large tracts of land designated as Agricultural Land Reserve; the preservation of agricultural land must be balanced with the needs and inherent aboriginal rights of First Nations.

Opportunities

- Increasing support by local governments, farmers, the public and others for securing foodlands will result in opportunities for partnership and collaborative governance;
- Other government initiatives such as the Community Charter may result in opportunities to strengthen the land reserve system and to deliver core services more efficiently and effectively; and
- The re-engineering of government offers new opportunities for partnerships, efficiencies and access to data and information to support the delivery of core services.

Core Business

The Commission administers the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) a provincial land use zone that encompasses 4.7 million hectares of agricultural land. The ALR was established in 1973-74 based on a review of agricultural capability (a combination of soil and climate), existing land use and an extensive consultation process. The boundaries of the ALR are continually adjusted to reflect better information on the suitability of lands for agriculture, changes in land use and community needs.

The *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* sets out processes for land use approvals including the inclusion or removal of land from the ALR, non-farm uses and subdivisions. The *Act* is supported by the Agricultural Land Reserve Procedure Regulation, which details procedures for applications, and the Agricultural Land Reserve Subdivision and Land Use Regulation, which defines permitted land uses and subdivisions of land within the ALR. The *Act* provides for the delegation of authority to decide non-farm use and subdivision applications to local governments or the Chief Executive Officer of the Commission.

In addition to land use applications under the *ALRA*, the Commission reviews the plans and by-laws of local governments and other agencies to ensure that the ALR is properly identified and that the policies are supportive of the ALR and farmland preservation.

The *Soil Conservation Act* enables the Commission and local governments to regulate the placement of fill and removal of soil within the ALR. Permits are issued by the local authority under the *SCA*, subject to the approval of the Commission.

The core business of the Commission is carried out through three function areas:

Strategic Planning & Corporate Policy. This function encompasses the Commission's policy development role, participation in the planning and policy initiatives of other organizations including local government plans and by-laws, and communications;

Regional Operations. This function is focused primarily on the review of applications under the *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* and the *Soil Conservation Act*, compliance and enforcement; and

Administration & Information Systems (GIS). This function includes secretarial and administrative support as well as record management. The Commission maintains an application database used for record management, and is legally obligated to maintain mapping of the ALR.

Note that the legislation, regulations and processes of the Commission will be changed during the term of this plan to reflect the evolving core business of the Commission and the outcome of initiatives such as de-regulation, the Administrative Justice Project and the Community Charter.

The Commission is also responsible for the regulation of land use on private land within the Forest Land Reserve and the regulation of forest practices on private land within the FLR and private managed forest land within the ALR. As a result of the Core Services Review process, the FLR and private land forest practices are no longer the core business of the Land Reserve Commission and will be transferred during the initial phase of this plan. This Plan focuses on the remaining core business of the Commission.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies & Performance Measures

Goal 1:

Ensure that the Commission is responsive, efficient and accountable

Objectives:

- To increase the regional responsiveness of the Commission to community needs.
- To encourage collaborative governance of the ALR.
- To respond to applications in a timely manner.
- To ensure that Commission decisions are made in a transparent, fair and equitable manner.
- To improve the efficiency of the ALR program.
- To ensure that the Commission is accountable for results.

Strategies:

- Re-organize Commission as 6 panels based in regions.
- Develop action plans specific to regions with Provincial, local government and stakeholder input.
- Work with local governments to address community needs through community planning processes.
- Reduce the application workload through voluntary delegation of non-farm and subdivision applications to local governments and other agencies and by expanding the range of permitted non-farm uses.
- Develop appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms for resolving conflicts and balancing interests.
- Participate in the Community Charter initiative.
- Move to modified results-based processes for planning, soil deposition/removal and other areas.
- Reduce regulations and applications by streamlining the *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* and regulations and by eliminating the *Soil Conservation Act* by incorporating key provisions into *ALRA* regulations.
- Set standards for application response times and monitor results using the Application Tracking System.
- Revise the Commission Governance Policy to reflect the outcomes of the Administrative Justice Project.
- Consult on the feasibility of increased cost recovery through a "recapture charge" for lands removed from the ALR.
- Monitor the impact of Commission and delegated decisions on the provincial interest in agricultural land and report results publicly.
- Transfer the regulation of land use and forest practices on private land within the FLR to another agency, industry or a public-private partnership.

Performance Measures & Targets

- Commission responsiveness to the needs of local governments and stakeholders is improved.

- 60% of non-farm and subdivision applications under the *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* decided by local governments and other agencies by the end of year 2004/05.
- 20% of current application load reduced through broadening permitted uses and other regulatory reductions by the end of year 2004/05.
- 80% of applications decided within 60 days of receipt.

Consistency with Government Strategic Plan and Priorities:

- Increase the regional responsiveness of the Commission to community needs.
- Adopt a scientifically-based, principled approach to environmental management that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility.
- Responsible, accountable management of British Columbians' public resources and tax dollars.
- An open and accountable government.
- Provide faster approvals and greater access to crown land and resources and to protect and create jobs in farming, ranging, and oil and gas production.
- Meet the objectives of the Administrative Justice Project to ensure that administrative agencies: meet the needs of the people they serve; have open and transparent administrative processes; have relevant and modern mandates; and have a legislative and policy framework that enables them to carry out their independent mandates effectively.

Goal 2:

Protect the agricultural land base

Objectives:

- Ensure that lands suitable for agriculture are retained within the ALR.
- Ensure that non-farm land use and subdivision within the ALR do not significantly impact on the suitability of lands for agriculture or existing agricultural operations.
- Work with local governments, First Nations and other agencies to ensure that the ALR is appropriately reflected in their land use plans, policies and agreements.

Strategies:

- Review and decide applications for inclusion, exclusion, non-farm use and subdivision under the *Agricultural Land Reserve Act* using the best available information, including site visits and meetings with applicants where possible.
- To reduce the amount of suitable agricultural land excluded from the ALR or alienated by incompatible development.
- Review the agricultural suitability of lands within the ALR as needed in response to improved information, planning reviews and land use trends.
- Improve agriculture and the suitability of lands for agriculture by negotiating, where appropriate, compensating benefits for agriculture if lands are removed from the ALR or converted to a non-farm use or subdivided.
- Monitor the impact of Commission decisions, policies and uses permitted under the *Act* and regulations on

agriculture and the suitability of lands for agriculture.

- Establish guidelines for official community plans that address the provincial interest in agricultural land preservation and criteria for auditing plans, as part of a modified results-based approach to planning for the ALR and as a basis for delegation.
- Participate in treaty settlement negotiations that involve the selection by First Nations of lands designated ALR.

Performance Measures & Targets:

- 80% of applications decided after a site visit.
- All exclusions of suitable agricultural land compensated for by a net benefit to agriculture or by satisfying a community need established through planning.
- Amount of land removed from the ALR (for any reasons other than poor suitability or community need established through planning) minimized.
- 80% of official community plans audited are consistent with the provincial guidelines for agricultural land preservation.

Consistency with Government Strategic Plan and Priorities:

- Adopt a scientifically-based, principled approach to environmental management that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility.
- Provide faster approvals and greater access to crown land and resources and to protect and create jobs in farming, ranging and oil and gas production.

Goal 3:

Enhance the sustainable use of the agricultural land base

Objectives:

- Work with local governments, First Nations and other agencies to ensure that their plans, policies and activities permit and enhance the use of the ALR for agriculture.
- Provide for farm and rural diversification, value-added activities and complementary non-farm uses within the ALR to support working farms and to stabilize local economies.

Strategies:

- Consult with local governments, First Nations and other agencies and/or develop guidelines to ensure that their plans, policies and activities permit and encourage farm uses within the ALR and that non-farm development does not negatively impact on existing agricultural operations or agricultural potential.
- Pursue collaborative governance arrangements that balance agricultural land preservation with the needs and aboriginal rights of First Nations.
- Identify non-farm uses and value-added activities that can be permitted in the ALR without negative impacts on agricultural businesses or the long-term suitability of lands for agriculture.

Performance Measures & Targets:

- Percentage of plans, policies and activities of others that permit and encourage farm uses within the ALR and provide

for the protection of existing agricultural businesses.

- Number of agreements entered into with First Nations respecting the ALR & treaty settlement lands.
- Increase in the number of complementary non-farm uses and value-added activities.
- Impact of non-farm uses and value-added activities on the ALR.
- 20% of current application load reduced through broadening permitted uses and other regulatory reductions by the end of year 2004/05.

Consistency with Government Strategic Plan and Priorities:

- Adopt a scientifically-based, principled approach to environmental management that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility.
- Provide faster approvals and greater access to crown land and resources and to protect and create jobs in farming, ranging, oil and gas production.
- A thriving private sector economy that provides high-paying job opportunities.

3 Year Plan and Milestones

2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Implement regional panels prior to April 1, 2002	Obtain local government & stakeholder feedback on regional responsiveness & modify panels as required	
Develop regional action plans by June 1, 2002	Regional action plans revised annually	
Review 20% of existing (200+) and all new official community plans to determine eligibility for delegation Delegate to 20% of local governments	Review 20% of existing and all new official community Plans to determine eligibility for delegation Delegate to 20% of local governments (40% total)	Review 20% of existing and all new official community plans to determine eligibility for delegation Delegate to 20% of local governments (60% total)
Transition to results-based system for reviewing & auditing official community plans	Audit 20% of priority official community plans annually (all plans with significant agricultural lands audited within 5 year cycle)	
Amend *LRCA, ALRA, SCA* and regulations to streamline process, broaden permitted uses & delete obsolete provisions		
Consult on feasibility of ALR "recapture charge"	Implement recapture charge as of April 1, 2003 if feasible	
Implement an exit strategy for private land forest practices and land use		
Establish basic performance measures (included in this plan)	Expand performance measures to reflect regional circumstances	Refine & expand performance measures to reach minimum needed to fully evaluate the land reserve system
Enter into data sharing arrangement with MSRM, others		
Amend Governance Policy to reflect Administrative Justice Project by September, 2002	Ongoing education of Commission and staff members and monitoring of Governance Policy	
Develop appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms.	Monitor and evaluate dispute resolution process.	

Resources

	2002/03 Estimates	2003/04 Plan	2004/05 Plan
Total Staff FTE's	29.5	21	20
Other Direct Operating Expenses ($000)	1,129	876	699
Total Budget ($000)	2,931	2,296	1,957